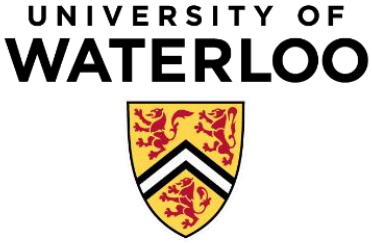
Co-operative Education Self-study Guide

ENHANCING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF YOUR CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM



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Chapter 1. Introduction to the Co-operative Education Self-study Guide

Introduction

Welcome to the University of Waterloo's Co-operative Education Self-study Guide. The Co-operative Education Self-study Guide (Guide) is a comprehensive resource for supporting post-secondary institutions, namely senior representatives supporting co-operative education, career services, disability support, human rights, equity, and similar services. The Guide has been developed with postsecondary institutional environments in mind. It will assist leaders to collectively identify and remove arbitrary barriers to meaningful co-operative work experiences for students with disabilities, and to demonstrate their commitment to adapting historical practices to meet the changing needs, abilities, and skill sets of its qualified students. The Guide will assist post-secondary institutions in creating, or enhancing, a culture of accessibility that is visible and tangible for students, allowing them improved access to resources and supports that will build their capacity and leverage their existing skill sets and knowledge in a dignified and systemic manner. The Guide is designed to apply important information from Ontario's Accessible Employment standards, and provide tips and strategies on how to reach beyond compliance by creating inclusive opportunities and work for all co-op students. The Guide is dynamic in nature and as such, it will continue to refine and grow as tools and resources are identified.

The Guide is organized in three chapters:

1) An introduction containing background material and an explanation of the approach
2) Key steps to establish and begin your strategic work
3) Core self-study questions to work through

In the remainder of this chapter, you will learn about the project journey of the University of Waterloo's departments of AccessAbility Services, Co-operative Education, and the Centre for Career Action. This chapter also discusses literature, which will be helpful if you need to build a case for support, write a grant, or convince people to undertake a self-study.

In Chapter 2 and the appendices, you will find a multitude of links to tools and resources to support your work to establish a more accessible and inclusive co-operative education program for your institution. Much of the investigation and strategic work proposed in Chapter 2, specifically, will require the oversight of a steering committee. Chapter 3 presents a host of reflective questions to support your self-study.

A note about inclusion

Although the Guide focuses primarily on students with disabilities and accessibility for students, you will find that much of the content in this Guide, specifically the questions asked in Chapter 3, applies to other equity-seeking groups. In your self-study work, consider looking at student experiences, from not only an accessibility perspective, but from a wide range of experiences. This may provide you an opportunity to identify inclusionary intersections that could produce strategies with a more universal design.

Project Background

Key terms

Read the definitions of "authentic partnership" and *disability* in **Appendix B. Key terms**

In 2017, representatives from the University of Waterloo's departments of AccessAbility Services, Co-operative Education, and the Centre for Career Action, engaged in an "**authentic partnership**" (Dupuis, 2011) with staff and students to develop a model for supporting students with **disabilities** that would enable meaningful participation in the exploration and pursuit of work-integrated learning. Later that year, the partnership was awarded with the Government of Ontario's EnAbling Change Grant to conduct a Participatory Action Research project entitled "Enhancing the accessibility of co-operative education in post-secondary institutions". The objectives of the project were to enhance access to, and participation in, the exploration and pursuit of co-operative educational experiences. The project enabled the partnership to reflect on how the university could provide a more proactive, inclusive educational experience that enables all students to participate meaningfully in the competitive employment process and co-operative work terms. The project team documented their processes and learning, and developed this *Co-operative Education Self-study Guide* with the intention of helping others interested in embarking on a similar journey.

Philosophy and guiding principles

This self-study guide promotes self-discovery of your institution's co-operative program while guiding you toward developing a culture of inclusivity. This culture is achieved by the following:

- promoting a collaborative approach that values the lived experiences of all employees (academic and non-academic), students, employers, and other stakeholders
- posing questions that encourages critical reflection of the current state in relation to accessibility and a sense of belonging
- providing tips, resources, and strategies found in 'evidence-informed' practices that help guide a strategy for enhancements
- building on the successes and achievements inherent to the institution to create, or sustain, broader culture change.

The guiding principles help to steer your co-operative education program's decisions and actions towards a desired goal. The Guide has incorporated two principles:

Principle 1: Commitment to culture change

Developing, sustaining, and promoting an inclusive work-integrated learning environment may not be as simple as checking off items on a checklist. It may require a process of organizational culture change. In order to engage in such a process, there will need to be a commitment to the culture change that involves all stakeholders including leaders, managers and front-line staff. Also, changes to the built environment, processes, and/or service provision will likely require resources (financial and/or time), employee training, and perhaps modification of job responsibilities. As a result, commitment is required by all to ensure desired actions and deliverables are achieved. While the process of changing a culture may seem daunting, it can be much easier (and enjoyable) than one may anticipate, and this Guide will provide guidance on how to achieve a commitment to culture change.

Principle 2: Commitment to collaborative approaches

The disability rights movement has helped promote a philosophy of "nothing about us without us". When working through the Guide, try to reflect on this philosophy and intentionally build processes that support it. True engagement of faculty, staff, students, and persons with lived experience of disability is critical, especially when involving those most affected by the changes to create lasting, effective, and relevant practices. This Guide is designed to foster inter-departmental dialogue and reflection, and to support the institution in engaging all key stakeholders in the change effort.

Approach

This Guide is not intended to be prescriptive. Each organization is different, so this resource is designed to help you create your own path of discovery, and strategies for enhancement. It supports you in gaining a firmer understanding of your organization, service recipients, employees, strengths, and your needs for enhancement.

Thus, Chapter 2 will help provide direction in steering you and your organization on a self-study journey towards enhancing inclusivity and access for persons with disabilities. In this section, we will introduce *GRASP*, an acronym for the five-phase cyclical approach that the Guide uses to organize the process of engaging in culture change and developing strategic plans of action. The GRASP approach is designed to assist you in better understanding your organization's current state in order to build an evidence-informed strategic plan.

The five phases of GRASP

Gather feedback

- Conduct an internal review of the current environmental state within the department(s)/organization
- Collect additional feedback by those most impacted by an issue (e .g., faculty, staff, student, employers)

Research

- Reflect on the current external environment and identify topics that require additional research
- Complete an external review to learn about resources, literature, services, and evidence-based practices relevant to an issue

Audit

- Reflect on how the department/organization aligns with best practices, current legislation, the needs/expectations of your clients, and internal values/visions, and identifies areas requiring further audit or assessment
- Audit or assess the performance of your department/organization with best practices, current legislation, internal values/visions, and stakeholder needs

Strategize

- Create a plan to prioritize the strategic areas that will best support the department/organization towards enhancing accessibility

Promote

- Celebrate the change by planning promotional strategies to make your actions known to your stakeholders

These five phases will be used through your self-study and strategic development process. The phases of GRASP will be described in detail in Chapter 2.

A literature review: Accessible experiential learning in post-secondary education

This section uses literature to build a rationale for this work, and to provide an opportunity for those involved in your initiative to have a shared base-line understanding of the issues at hand. This section may also be helpful for those drafting a proposal or briefing note to support the need for such an initiative.

Barriers to education and employment

Access to publicly funded colleges and universities in the province of Ontario, hereby referred to as post-secondary education (PSE), is becoming essential for persons with disabilities, as the job market increasingly requires employees to have completed PSE. The Government of Canada has estimated that by 2024, 71% of new jobs will require applicants to have obtained PSE or training (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2015). As reported by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario in 2011, Ontarians with a disability have a post-secondary educational attainment 13-20% lower than Ontarians without a disability. While PSE is now a preparatory milestone for future career success, persons with disabilities continue to experience a myriad of unnecessary physical, attitudinal, and systemic barriers in accessing and meaningfully participating in PSE. In an effort to resolve such barriers, and create 'a level playing field' that respects and protects human rights, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) articulates in their *Guidelines on accessible education* that all educational institutions have a legal duty to accommodate students with disability.

Despite the barriers in accessing PSE, the number of students with disabilities enrolling in Canadian PSE, as well as participating in experiential learning, which includes co-operative education, has been steadily increasing (McCloy & DeClou, 2013; Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d.). Except, the employment rate of persons with disabilities, including those with post-secondary degrees, continue to be lower than the national average (Turcotte, 2015). In a 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability, persons with a disability aged 25-64 years old reported an employment rate 30% lower than persons without a disability. These trends serve to highlight the myriad of physical, attitudinal and systemic barriers experienced by persons with disabilities seeking to participate in meaningful exploration and pursuit of employment. Although work-integrated learning in post-secondary institutions is designed to facilitate success in employment post-graduation, the barriers experienced by persons with disabilities appear to extend to the pursuit of work-integrated learning experiences, including co-operative education. With this in mind, many post-secondary institutions are working to establish strategic, proactive, and systemic approaches to provide inclusive educational experiences that enable all students to participate meaningfully. Thus, these institutions are seeking ways to ensure that their experiential learning programs are inclusive and accessible, thereby creating clear pathways for students with disabilities to gain meaningful employment post-graduation.

Barriers in co-operative education

The OHRC's *Guidelines on accessible education* defines accommodation as "…a means of preventing and removing barriers that impede students with disabilities from participating fully in the educational environment in a way that is responsive to their own unique circumstances." Accommodations are modifications not intended to alter the fundamental purpose or essential requirements of the academic program or course. Within the current educational environment, the legal duty to accommodate students with disability means addressing the barriers within co-operative education. According to the OHRC, in order for students to participate fully in an

educational program, educational providers must adhere to three principle factors for accommodation:

- **Respect for dignity**: Providers must oblige the right of a student to receive services in a manner that respects the dignity of the individual.
- **Individualized accommodation**: Providers must have a clear understanding of the individual student's needs. Emphasis must be placed on the individual and not on their category of disabilities to prevent generalization.
- **Belonging and full participation**: All students should be able to access the same learning environment(s) involving the same fundamental requirements with dignity and without barriers. Thus, providers must first make efforts to create or adapt current services to promote a sense of belonging and full participation (Principles of Accommodation, OHRC).

Disability support offices in PSE are mandated to develop academic accommodation plans with students, which are then communicated to course instructors in a manner that maintains privacy and dignity (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2017). These disability support offices (often called accessibility services) use industry standards of practice, case law, and professional judgement, as well as guidance provided by the Ministry and provincial human rights law, to determine reasonable academic accommodations that enhance access to the learning environment.

Academic accommodations for students in traditional PSE classroom environments are well established. However, when the learning environment extends into the pursuit of co-operative education, the standards of practice are not well defined. Some students with disabilities are able to successfully navigate the co-operative education process and obtain meaningful employment; however, others have reported barriers to full participation and as a result, have not been as successful. For post-secondary programs where co-operative education (and, more broadly, work-integrated learning) is a core requirement of the curriculum, students struggling to find employment may either self-select, or, be required to withdraw that aspect of the program.

Based on our experiences and what we have learned from other post-secondary institutions, most have developed informal processes to address the needs of students with disabilities in the work-integrated learning environment, which have enabled them to experience the successes and benefits of participating in co-operative education on a one-off basis. While these efforts have resulted in successes for students with disabilities in co-operative education programs, there remains both recognized and unrecognized barriers to accessing and succeeding in co-operative education for some students with disabilities. Moreover, the increased popularity and growth of work-integrated learning requires a strategic, sustainable, and collaborative approach.

Building a more inclusive co-operative educational experience

Through what has been shared anecdotally by others, many PSE institutions in Ontario and beyond recognize the importance of creating and sustaining an inclusive and accessible co-operative education program. These institutions are eager to reflect on current practices and approaches and make positive changes to foster a campus culture of accessibility and sense of belonging. These PSE institutions understand that increasing accessibility within co-operative education benefits students, and strengthens their relationships with employers by ensuring

that employers have access to the most qualified and suitable employment candidates. We have observed an increasing number of employers promoting inclusive hiring practices, and/or they are actively recruiting students with disabilities for positions. These employers see the benefits that people with disabilities can provide to their organizations.

Some of the benefits include:

- People with disabilities provide unique perspectives and a competitive advantage as job seekers because they have likely had opportunities to develop creative solutions and unique skill sets and abilities.
- A workplace that visibly reflects the diversity found in the community in which it is situated can help to provide a positive experience for customers because it demonstrates a welcoming and inclusive environment for all.
- Many organizations are seeking to enhance the accessibility of their products or services. The lived experience and expertise of persons with disabilities can help employers better understand their target markets and design for accessibility.
- A diverse workforce breeds innovation, as people with different backgrounds can see business challenges and solutions from unique perspectives.
- Persons with disabilities, like all persons, are unique individuals who embody strengths and skills that are assets to various employers.
- Expanding the employment search pool more intentionally to persons with disabilities can help to address any anticipated labour shortage.

Chapter 2. Getting started

Some post-secondary institutions may have a well-established culture of inclusivity that promotes access for students with disabilities in all facets of campus life, including co-operative education. Other institutions may be still developing. In either situation, building or maintaining a culture of inclusivity and accessibility requires ongoing, deliberate actions that promote and enhance that culture. Embarking on a culture change initiative, or even making small changes to existing practices, can seem overwhelming. However, it does not have to be. This section is designed to help you think through, and embark on, the **GRASP** process to undertake your change initiative. You will find that the steps become easier to understand as you apply them.

Key terms

Read the definition of *GRASP* in **Appendix B. Key terms**

Step 1. Establish a Steering Committee

It will be helpful to establish a standing **Steering Committee** dedicated to propelling this project forward and making major decisions related to the initiative. The committee may meet bi-monthly, monthly, or when needed – whatever works for your organization. When building your Steering Committee, consider inviting institutional leaders and champions of change, including:

- Senior leaders (faculty / staff) of co-operative education program(s)
- Senior academic representatives (e.g., deans, department chairs)
- Senior leaders in disability support office
- Senior leaders in career services
- Senior student leaders
- Student(s) with a disability
- Employees representing the student experience in co-operative education (e.g., student advisor)
- Employees representing Diversity, Equity, Human Rights, and Inclusion offices

Key terms

Read the definitions of *Steering Committee* and *Chair* in **Appendix B. Key terms**

The Steering Committee will be responsible for creating the vision for change and connecting it to the organization's governing policy and existing strategic priorities related to co-operative education at an institutional level. The Steering Committee will have the following key responsibilities.

- Representative(s) from the Steering Committee will lead (**Chair**) the Working Groups who are responsible for working through Chapter 3 of the Guide. The Working Group Chair representatives are responsible for bringing forward information summaries to the Steering Committee so that the Steering Committee is involved in all major decisions.
- The Steering Committee will use information from the Working Groups to determine what additional actions will be required to gather additional feedback, research/conduct an external review, or audit the department/organization.
- The Steering Committee will use all information to develop an overarching strategy for enhancing the accessibility of co-operative education.
- The Steering Committee will make all major decisions, explore and manage human and financial resources, delegate work when needed, and connect the initiative to other institutional priorities and individuals/departments.

Step 2. Hold Steering Committee Meetings

Once you have identified the right people to join the Steering Committee, the next step will be to build the foundation for the project collaboratively. The Steering Committee can start by planning the agendas for their first few meetings. These meetings will begin by helping all parties get accustomed to each other, and the mandates of various departments, in an effort to build trust and collaboration between team members. Establishing a supportive Steering Committee, with a clear vision for action, may take time. It is encouraged that you take the time to build a strong foundation, as it is an important step to creating lasting change. Topics of conversation (i.e., the focus of a meeting) can include the following themes:

Theme 1: Build authentic partnerships

Build authentic partnerships to "encourage communities to engage in critical reflection and to work collaboratively and equally to promote social change, equality, and empowerment" (MAREP, n.d.). To achieve authentic partnership, each Steering Committee member will focus their efforts on including and learning about the unique perspectives of all members around the table. Taking time to build authentic partnerships within the Steering Committee is critical as it establishes a foundational level of trust that will sustain the initiative, and ensures that all members agree with what the group is trying to achieve. When coming together, it is important to reflect on the partnership, and to articulate the needs of the group. To do this, collectively reflecting on the following questions may be helpful.

Resource

Learn more about Authentic Partnerships

- Who are the people sitting around the table? Who is missing?
- What do our departmental units do? What are our roles?
- What expertise do we bring (personal/professional)? What are our strengths? What are the knowledge gaps?
- How often will we meet? What formats will we use? How will we communicate with each other?
- What do we each need to meaningfully participate? Do we need accommodations or supports?
- How do we create a safe space for all? What do we need to feel that we are safe and belong?
- How will we reflect on our process?

Theme 2: Form a rationale for engaging in the self-study

Once the committee has been established and a level of trust and awareness has been developed, it is important to gain an understanding of what the committee is hoping to achieve, and its motives, by working through the Guide. The members on the Steering Committee are all subject matter experts who have knowledge and experiences to share. They understand the current state, the challenges, the needs, and likely have a vision of what they are hoping to achieve. Using this information, it may be helpful to write out a purpose statement with high-level goals or objectives. This may be captured in a summary document or within a term of reference. Clearly articulating the overarching reasons for coming together to embark on this culture change journey will help to motivate the committee, ensure work remains within scope, and allow the committee members to promote the initiative to others appropriately. To do this, it may be helpful to reflect collectively on the following questions.

- What brought us together?
- What are we hoping to achieve? What is our purpose?
- Where do we want to be in 1 year? In 5 years?
- What may not be possible or within scope?
- What are our guiding principles?
- What are the opportunities for enhancement?
- What improvements/changes have we recently implemented to enhance accessibility?
- What can we learn from other change-focused projects on campus?

Theme 3: Explore readiness for change

Resources

Learn more about change management and why it is important

As the Steering Committee begins to formalize its purpose for embarking on the Self-Study, it is critical to stop and reflect on your department/organization's readiness for change. Any modifications to infrastructure, processes, job responsibilities or priorities, will require resources, including human and financial. For example, employees may need time to process and synthesize new information, resources may require reassignment to support a new initiative, or employees may temporarily take on a new project. It is recommended that changes like these are not conducted as ad-hoc tasks, but as dedicated projects with scheduled time for planning, implementation, and evaluation of changes. To do this, it may be helpful to reflect collectively on the following questions:

- Are we ready to review current processes?
- Are we ready to learn from what we discover?
- Do we have champions who can propel this initiative forward, both those in leadership positions as well as those working most closely with students/employers?
- Are we ready to change or enhance the institutional culture and employer relationships?
- What is within scope for change?
- Do we have the resources to devote to this process, as well as make any necessary changes?
- What are the risks for change? What are the risks for not changing?
- Have we connected with a project sponsor, such as an executive or senior member, that we would report to?
- Are we prepared for a long-term commitment to change?
- Are we prepared to manage the expectations of those who might immediately proceed to a mode of problem solving?

Step 3. Create Working Groups

Key terms

Read the definition of Working Group in **Appendix B. Key terms**

Prior to working through the self-study questions in Chapter 3, the Steering Committee will be tasked with forming three **Working Groups**, each of which will explore a critical area, or Pillar, related to co-operative education and accessibility. The Pillars reflect three of the five Standards within the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). These three standards are the most applicable within the scope of this Guide and are likely areas that your department has been exploring to ensure AODA compliance. The three pillars are also identified in literature as being critical to creating inclusive and accessible communities, which is relevant to creating an inclusive and accessible co-operative education program.

These three **Pillars** are:

- Accessible Communication - related to the *Information and Communications Standard*
- Accessible Spaces - related to the *Design of Public Spaces Standard*
- Accessible Services - related to the *Customer Service Standard*

The Steering Committee will need to determine the people best suited to serve on the Working Group for that Pillar. It is recommended that one or two Steering Committee members sit in each Working Group, with one or more serving as Chair. **Figure 1** depicts the relationship of the Steering Committee with the three Working Groups.

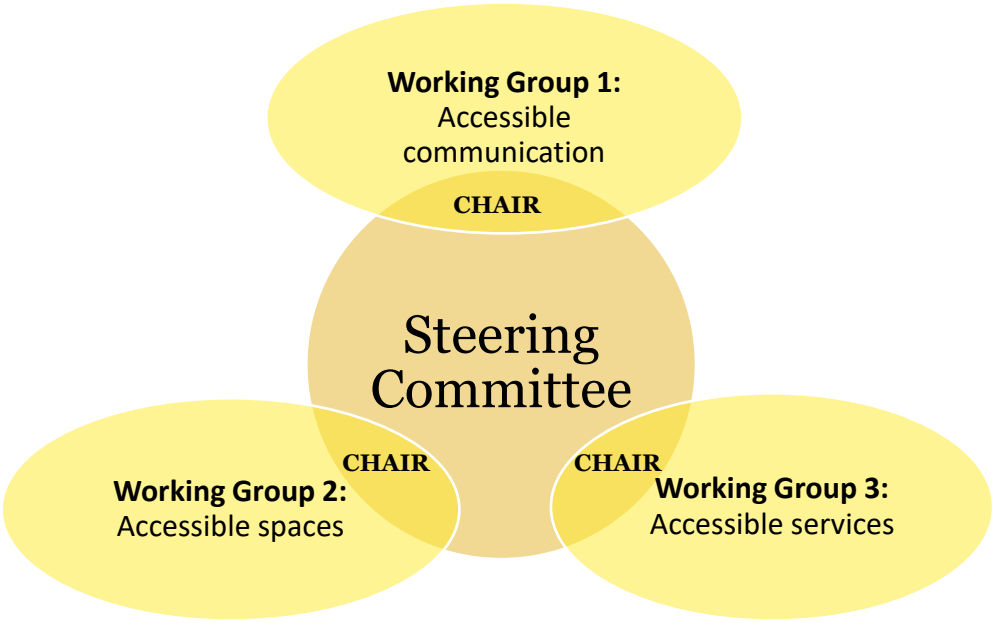

FIGURE 1. THE RELATIONSHIPS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUPS

The remaining members of the working groups will be comprised of employees and students who have knowledge of the topics specific to one (or more) of the Pillars. To develop early engagement in this initiative, it is recommended that the Steering Committee invite applications for the working groups and select from the applicants. With cultural change being the goal, this step can be important. When selecting your members for each working group, consider their knowledge and experience in the topic. **Table 1** recommends departments and personnel that could serve on your Working Groups. Appropriate representation of each Working Group may differ from the suggestions provided in Table 1. It is the role of the Steering Group to identify the co-op program(s) and related departments, and the representative individuals (e.g., staff, faculty and students) of those units. When members of your Working Groups have been assigned, you may find it helpful to provide mandatory training for the Working Group members, including Chairs of each Working Group. AccessForward provides online modules to assist your training process. Links to the modules are provided in the sidebar.

Resources

AccessForward online training modules

Information and Communications Standard

Design of Public Spaces Standard

Customer Service Standard

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Working Group 1: Accessible communication	Working Group 2: Accessible spaces	Working Group 3: Accessible services
• Senior leadership of relevant academic department(s), the disability support office, career services, and co-op department • Employees who coordinate communications and marketing to current and prospective students and employers • Employees who support administrative work • Employees who develop employment opportunities and liaise with employers • Employees with expertise working with persons with disabilities • Employees with expertise working with internal and external partners, including employers, students, and other clients • Students with disabilities • Employees with disabilities	• Senior leadership of relevant academic department(s), career services, and co-op department • Managers and frontline employees of building operations • Managers and frontline employees of administrative operations and customer service • Employees who develop employment opportunities and liaise with employers • Employees with expertise working with persons with disabilities • Students with disabilities • Employees with disabilities	• Senior leadership of relevant academic department(s), the disability support office, career services, and co-op department • Frontline employees who advise students on careers, co-op, and accommodations • Advisors and/or frontline employees of building operations • Instructors/facilitators of professional develop courses/workshops • Managers and/or frontline operations employees • Information technology (IT) representatives • Students with disabilities • Employees with disabilities

TABLE 1. RECOMMENDED PERSONNEL FOR THE WORKING GROUPS

Step 4. The Working Groups conduct self-studies

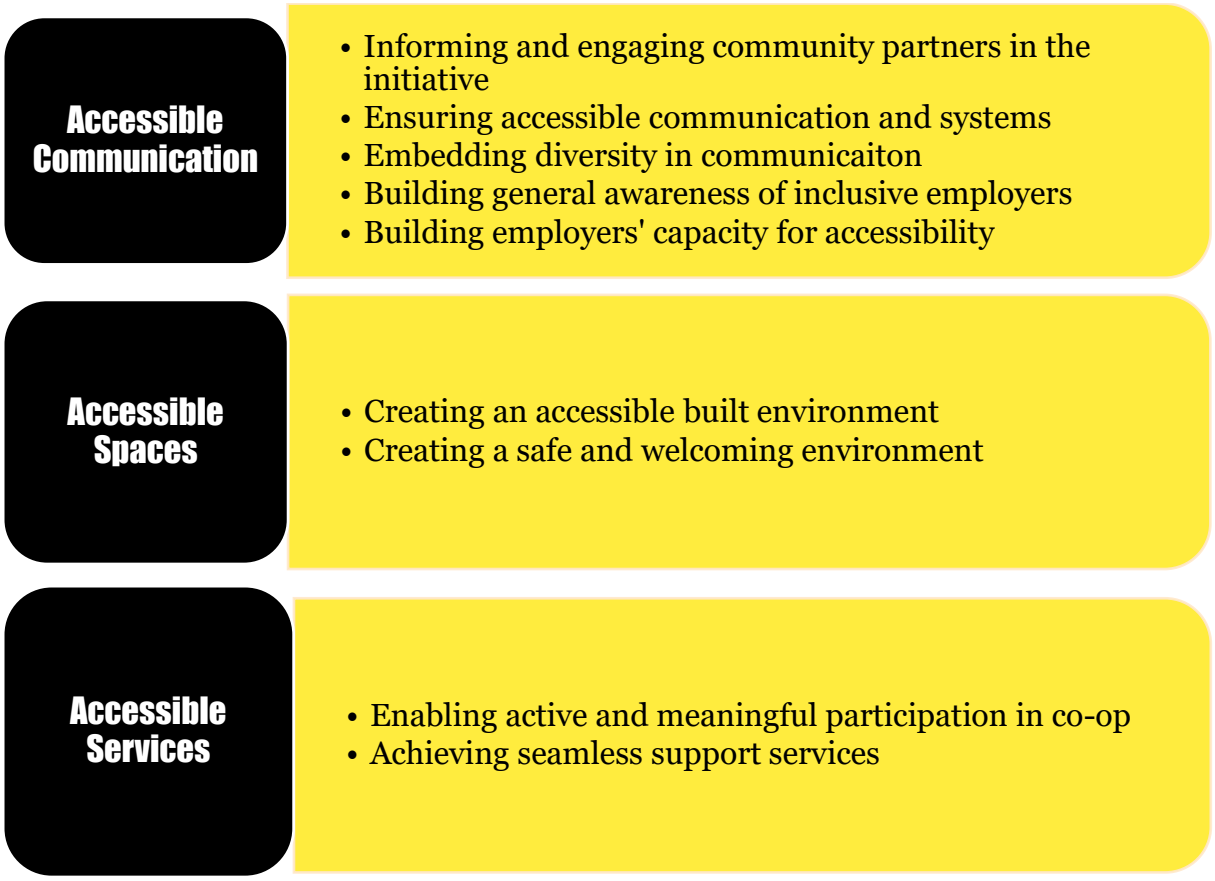

FIGURE 2. THE PILLARS AND RESPECTIVE STRATEGIC AREAS

The self-study questions within each of the three Pillars are grouped into strategic areas of focus (see Figure 2). The Working Group will respond to the self-study questions within each strategic area, using only the feedback and insights of the Working Group. **Appendix A.1** provides a Worksheet for each Working Group to use when working through the self-study questions in their Pillar.

The Working Group will select a strategic area to explore first (e.g., Safe and Welcoming Environment used in the Figure 4 sample). As the Working Group responds to the self-study questions within this strategic area, they will document their insights and discussions in the Worksheet (**Appendix A.1**) in the column titled "What we know" (see sample, Figure 4).

As the Working Group proceeds through the self-study questions, they will likely identify information gaps. It is understandable if the Working Group cannot completely respond to some questions and require additional input or exploration; in fact, this is expected and encouraged. When this occurs, the Working Group can capture these gaps, and the actions required to gain these insights in the Worksheet (Appendix A.1) in the column titled "What we don't know" [see sample, Figure 4).

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Once the Working Group has worked through one strategic area (using only information from the Working Group), and have identified actions required to increase awareness and gain insight, they can move onto another strategic area until they have worked through all of the self-study questions within the Pillar. The Working Group Chair will bring insights back to the Steering Committee to ensure that the entire Steering Committee is informed about progress and are aware of emerging themes.

GRASP in action – Step 4

An example of a working group conducting a self-study

The *Accessible Spaces* Working Group responds to the self-study questions in Chapter 3. They answer all questions in the strategic areas of "Creating an accessible built environment" and "Creating a safe and welcoming environment".

As they answer the questions, the Working Group records what they know and what they do not know in the Worksheet (Appendix A.1). For the strategic area of "Creating a safe and welcoming environment", the Working Group has determined that they will need to gather feedback, conduct additional research, and request for a formal audit. They include these recommended actions in the Worksheet.

The Chair will present the Working Group's findings to the Steering Committee. Until then, the Working Group will await the Steering Committee's decision.

Step 5. The Steering Committee develops an approach to seek additional information

Once the Working Groups have responded to the reflective questions in all three Pillars, the Steering Committee can review the Worksheet (Appendix A.1) column called "What we don't know" to develop an approach to Gather Feedback, Research, and Audit more broadly. While the Steering Committee will need to prioritize actions and make decisions about allocating resources in order to complete these tasks, the Working Groups will be responsible for completing or monitoring the actions required for finalizing the GRASP process.

GRASP in action – Step 5

An example of a steering committee developing an approach to seek additional feedback

The Steering Committee has decided the actions the Working Group will explore with respect to Accessible Spaces. The Steering Committee has decided that:

1. In order to gather student feedback, the Student Experience Manager will hold a focus group of co-op students with disabilities to assess how accessible and welcoming the space is.
2. The Working Group will hire a research assistant to conduct research for all three pillars, including best practices related to a safe and welcoming environment.
3. The operations team will contract services of a third-party agency to audit the space.

Step 6. The Working Groups seek additional information

New insights gained from the external reviews (e.g., focus groups, audits, etc.) can be captured by the Working Group members in the final column in the Worksheet (**Appendix A.1**), titled "What we learned".

The steps to seek additional information, within each strategic area, are again broken down according to the first three phases of **GRASP**:

Gather feedback

The Working Groups would use the tips provided in **Appendix A.2** to plan an approach to gather feedback, such as from interviews, focus groups, or surveys, on the current state of the environment with those who know best.

Research

The Working Groups will use the tips provided in **Appendix A.3** to plan an approach to gather this information and conduct a more thorough external environmental scan.

Audit

When this occurs, the Working Groups will use the tips and suggestions provided in **Appendix A.4** to plan an approach to assess aspects within the co-op process, or audit areas within the built environment.

Therefore, all three of these phases will assist your Steering Committee in developing evidence-informed strategic plans for change.

GRASP in action – Step 6

An example of a working group seeking additional information

The Working Group's Chair oversees the work of collecting additional feedback and learning more about Accessible Spaces.

1. The Chair meets with the Manager of Student Experience and discusses the proposed questions for the focus group (Appendix A.2).
2. The Chair meets with the research assistant and explains the possible research areas listed in Appendix A.3.
3. The Chair works with the operations team and finds a third-party agency who will audit the space free of charge. The Chair shares Appendix A.4 to determine the areas that require audits.

Following this work, the Chair will summarize and present the findings to the Steering Committee, similar to Figure 4.

Notes

It may take the Working Group and the Steering Committee time (weeks, months, etc.) to work through Chapter 3 and Appendices A.1-A.4, especially if it requires multiple actions to gather

feedback (e.g. focus groups, surveys, interviews, meetings, etc.), research, and conduct audits and assessments. The time spent conducting a comprehensive and thorough review of the current state is essential in order to make evidence-informed decisions and to determine appropriate and impactful opportunities for growth and change. As you go through this process, consider what actions you will take to ensure people remain engaged and expectations are managed.

To assist your Steering Committee and Working Groups in their understanding of Steps 4 through 6, a process diagram has been provided in **Appendix A.5**.

PILLAR 3. ACCESSIBLE SPACES				
Strategic Area	**GRASP Phase**	**What we know** ***Answer the self-study questions listed in Chapter 3***	**What we don't know** ***View appendices B-D for tips on collecting information from other sources and stakeholders***	**What we learned**
Creating a safe and welcoming space	**G**ather feedback	*The Working Group believes the reception area is very welcoming as staff are friendly, helpful, and there is colourful wall art. The interview spaces are less welcoming as they are small and do not have any warm furnishings. The paging system does not appear to be accessible to persons with hearing impairments. The main areas appear to be well lit and clean (free from obstruction). Signage appears to be clear, visible and direct.*	*We are not exactly sure how students use the space. We also don't know if they think that the space is welcoming.* *We believe a student focus group would help us to understand how they use the space and determine how friendly and welcoming the spaces is.* *In addition, a small survey could be sent to employers to determine how safe and welcoming they feel the interview space is.*	*After conducting the student focus group, it was evident that the paging system was not accessible to persons with sensory disabilities, nor was the waiting area very accessible to persons with mental health or attention disabilities. The reception area was deemed welcoming, but many found the scented air diffuser to trigger their allergies or asthma. Employers found the inside space welcoming and safe, but the parking was considered far away and they found finding the building to be confusing.*
	Research	*The Working Group is not aware of any best practices in post-secondary education for creating safe and welcoming spaces.*	*In knowledge is limited in this domain. Someone may want to contact other post-secondary institutions to determine how they designed their co-operative building to support accessibility.* *A site visit to other local co-op buildings may be helpful.*	*University X was determined to be a leader in creating an accessible and welcoming co-op experience. A site visit was conducted and a list of key features was created and will be circulated to the Steering Committee.*
	Audit	*The Working Group does not believe that the co-op building has ever been assessed to ensure it promotes a safe and welcoming environment.*	*We could not verify if a formal audit or assessment has been previously completed. This should be investigated first. If it has not, the University's Accessibility Committee and the student advisory committee could audit the space.*	*The signage was identified as an area that could be enhanced, as well as the waiting area.*

SAMPLE

FIGURE 3. SAMPLE OF A COMPLETED STRATEGIC AREA REVIEW

Step 7. Strategize (create a strategic plan)

Once the Working Groups have conducted a thorough internal and external review, and have audited the current state of the environment, the Steering Committee will use this information, as well as the Working Group Self-study Worksheet, provided in **Appendix A.6**, to prioritize the strategic areas that will best support your department/organization in efforts to enhancing accessibility. The Steering Committee can begin by selecting one of the strategic priorities, and then review the information from the Working Group Self-Study Worksheet to determine its priority within a timeframe (e.g., year 1). Priorities will be determined based on the needs of your unit, as well as based on what is already working well. Priorities may also be determined based on feasibility, compliance, risk and user needs.

Resources

Prioritization techniques – This resource page from the University of Waterloo provides a small list of prioritization techniques to help your committee learn of available prioritization options.

The idea evaluation matrix (PDF): This is a screening process and qualitative decision-making tool to help your Steering Committee prioritize your strategic initiatives.

Project complexity and risk assessment (PCRA) tool [Excel spreadsheet]: A more complex technique, this 64-question assessment can help guide your committee in determining the risks and complexity of your strategic initiatives.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY PLANNING TOOL		
High Priority (within year 1)	**Medium Priority (within year 1)**	**Low Priority (within year 1)**
- Informing and engaging community partners in the initiative - Ensuring accessible communication and systems - Creating an accessible built environment	- Embedding diversity in communication - Building student awareness of inclusive employers - Enabling active and meaningful participation in co-op	- Building employers' capacity for accessibility - Achieving seamless support services - Creating a safe and welcoming environment

SAMPLE

TABLE 2. SAMPLE OF A COMPLETED STRATEGIC PRIORITY PLAN

Once the priorities have been identified, the next step is to develop a more comprehensive action plan. You can use the template in **Appendix A.6** (sample provided below) or another method that is more familiar to your department/organization. The Steering Committee can continue to monitor progress on these action items at their meetings and determine the success of these initiatives based on established criteria.

STRATEGIC PLANNING TOOL						
Strategic priorities	**Specific actions/tactics**	**Lead person**	**Start date**	**End date**	**Key milestones**	**Measures of success**
Informing and engaging community partners in the initiative	Draft targeted communication promoting the initiative for: campus news feed, co-op website, internal newsletter	Jane Doe	April 4, 2018	July 30, 2018	Promotional communication developed, ready for communications team review, promotional communication published	Publish promotional communication on a minimum of 3 media channels regularly viewed by students, staff, and faculty
Informing and engaging community partners in the initiative	Draft a press release promoting the initiative for the local newspaper	John Doe	July 2, 2018	July 31, 2018	Press release drafted developed, ready for communications team review, press release published	Publish press release to a minimum of 1 local newspaper

SAMPLE

TABLE 3. SAMPLE OF A COMPLETED STRATEGIC PLAN

Step 8. Promote (promote and celebrate the change)

In this final stage, the Steering Committee will enact your actions for change. The people responsible for implementation of each action would be determined based on the scope and stakeholders of the action plan. As part of this process, the Steering Committee is encouraged to plan promotional strategies to make your actions known to your stakeholders and celebrate these changes and successes along the way. Culture change requires the department/organization to remain motivated, encouraged, and engaged during the process, and celebrating the successes (both small and large) will help to keep the initiative going. Your strategic plan may involve changes that will take significant time and effort to implement. As the Steering Committee facilitates promotion, it is equally important to ensure that stakeholder expectations are managed.

Appendix A.7 will provide you with promotional opportunities and helpful resources.

Step 9. Repeat GRASP (to evaluate your strategic actions)

GRASP is a cyclical process. It is used not only to assess your current state prior to your actions, but it is used to re-evaluate the current state once you have enacted changes. Through measurement, self-reflection, and by receiving continuous feedback, you will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of each strategic action. You will need to stay connected with your stakeholders, especially students with disabilities, so they may provide feedback on actions designed to improve accessibility.

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Re-evaluation of your current state will likely be a more expedient process, and can occur whenever you feel it is appropriate. When repeating the GRA phases of GRASP, you will have the option to use the same questions you had asked in the first iteration. In doing so, you will be able to compare and contrast results, thereby enabling you to identify areas of success and areas for future improvement.

FIGURE 4. THE CYCLICAL PROCESS OF GRASP

Chapter 3. Strategic Areas for Self-study

The self-study questions provided in the strategic areas below will help guide your working groups in assessing the current state and envisioning your enhancement strategies. These self-study questions are organized using GRA (Gather Feedback, Research, Audit), the first three parts of the GRASP method.

Pillar 1. Accessible communication

One approach to developing an inclusive co-operative education culture is to create an overarching strategy related to accessible communication. To achieve this strategy, it may be necessary to develop strategic priorities related to:

- informing and engaging community partners in the initiative
- ensuring accessible communication and systems
- embedding diversity in communication
- building student awareness of inclusive employers
- building employers' capacity for accessibility

Informing and engaging community partners in the initiative

When embarking on an organizational self-study project, it helps to engage all relevant stakeholders in the process, and communicate goals and objectives to the wider campus community. The campus, employers, and other stakeholders will likely be interested in your project and have relevant information to share. As such, it is important for your Steering Committee to develop a communication strategy that engages a wider audience, generates interest, and manages expectations. To help determine an effective strategy, the working group will work through the following questions:

Gather Feedback

- Who are the key academic and non-academic departments and partners we need to engage in our self-study project? Who may be interested in knowing about our initiative?
- What existing meetings provide an opportunity for us to promote the initiative in-person (e.g., leadership meetings, managers meetings, team meetings, etc.)?
- What mechanisms are in place for people to engage and get involved in the project?

Research

- What effective methods that we know of can promote the self-study process while managing expectations and protecting institutional reputation?

Audit

- What do we know about our current communication approaches and how can they be useful in promoting our self-study project?
- How are we currently assessing our promotional materials/messages to ensure they capture our key messages, manage expectations, and protect our institutional reputation?

- What are the risks of promoting the project to certain groups, including the appropriate timing of engaging with those groups?

Ensuring accessible communication and systems

All student-facing communication (including systems, content, promotional materials, and communication channels) must be accessible, keeping universal design in mind. This will ensure that students with disabilities can meaningfully participate in all aspects of co-op, including:

- applying for jobs
- booking appointments/meetings
- submitting materials
- attending events, and
- participating in associated courses and workshops (online or in-person)

It is important to plan for accessibility upfront, and make modifications to enhance accessibility where possible.

Gather Feedback

- What are the needs and requirements of those who use and access our content?
- Do all of our communication channels and content meet legislated accessibility standards?
- How do we currently ensure all online forms or websites used to invite students to events are accessible?
- What are our mechanisms for people to request accommodations to access communication and receive information in an alternative format (e.g., large print or ASL interpreter)?
- How accessible are the systems connected to the co-operative education process? Are there any systems or system-based processes that may negatively affect a student's access?
- What are the institution's procurement policies and practices with respect to software systems? Are accessibility requirements a priority?

Research

- What do we know about website accessibility standards and requirements within Ontario?
- What do we know about the accessible communication standards within Ontario?
- Do we know of writing and web evaluation tools to support our communication auditing process?
- What do we know about procurement best practices as it relates to accessibility requirements?

Audit

- How are we currently auditing our communication channels and systems to ensure they adhere to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards as well

as best practice for accessibility? If not, how might we audit communication channels and systems for accessibility?

Embedding diversity in communication

Embedding diversity in communication can be defined in two ways. First, it is to embed diversity within your communication strategies to ensure your organization is striving for diverse representation. Second, it is to embed diverse forms of communication ensures that your messages meet the needs of different audiences. By achieving both facets, it helps to promote a welcoming and inclusive space that reduces stigma often associated with having a disability and ultimately helps to create a culture of inclusivity. When you build diverse communication materials that reflect diversity, students are better able to access the content and relate to its message.

Gather Feedback

- How does the content in our institutional communication (including images, stories, case studies, and examples) reflect diversity and the lives/experiences of persons with disabilities?
- What mechanisms are in place for students and other stakeholders to provide feedback on existing and future content in relation to how it captures diversity and their lived experience?
- What actions will we take to develop an engagement strategy for students with disabilities to collect their success stories, challenges, and personal examples?

Research

- What are effective methods that we know of for developing and publishing effective stories?

Audit

- How are we currently auditing our institutional content to address the need for including images, stories, and lived experiences of people with disabilities?
- How can we continue to audit our content to ensure it remains relevant to (and reflective of) our campus (and broader) community?

Building student awareness of inclusive employers

Many employers are striving to create a workplace that reflects the diversity within their community (Government of Ontario, 2015). They recognize that diversity within an organization helps to create a unique, productive and innovative culture. There are also jobs that call for candidates with unique skill sets or experiences. For example, persons with disabilities may have acquired unique experiences, insights, or skills that can be an asset to a position. Students benefit when they can easily access information about employment opportunities with inclusive employers.

Gather Feedback

- How can we effectively promote inclusive employers to job-seeking students?
- How do students search for jobs that require unique qualifications and/or experiences (e.g., jobs where the experiences of persons with disabilities would be an asset)?

- How do we evaluate the effectiveness of our strategies to promote inclusive employers?

Research

- Which of our current co-operative education employer partners openly promote inclusive hiring practices and/or have diverse recruitment initiatives targeted to candidates with disabilities?
- Do we know of specialized services that collaborate with employers to find and create job opportunities for people with disabilities?
- Do we know of services that specialize in providing resources and employment support for people with disabilities? Which of these services would be willing to partner with our institution?
- Do we know of any opportunities to inform job-seeking students of inclusive employers?

Audit

- How are we auditing our communication channels to understand available opportunities for promoting inclusive employers?
- How are we assessing limitations and risks to promoting positions targeted solely to people with disabilities?

Building employers' capacity for accessibility

Organizations who see the benefits of hiring people with disabilities will adapt their recruitment and employment practices to ensure that they are accessible to persons with disabilities. Organizations often need support on adapting and embracing new recruitment and employment practices that are inclusive of diverse populations. Employers will often welcome materials and resources that guide them in making small changes to increase accessibility.

Gather Feedback

- What information and/or resources are employers seeking in relation to accessibility and accessible hiring practices?
- What information are we currently sharing with employers in relation to accessibility and accessible hiring practices, including disability disclosure and information privacy?
- What mechanism(s) are we currently using to communicate with employers and what mechanisms could be used to further promote a sense of belonging (e.g., promotional material, recruitment-related procedural messages, and hiring policies)?
- What are some positive examples of when an employer was inclusive, accessible, or implemented a successful accommodation for a student? What success stories do we know about that might motivate others?

Research

- What are the most well known merits to hiring people with disabilities that we can communicate to employers?
- What do we know about provincial, national, and international regulations related to the employer's duty to accommodate?
- Do we know of any promotional strategies to effectively reach employers?

Audit

- How are we auditing all current and potential communication channels to understand potential informational opportunities for promoting accessibility to employers?
- How are we assessing any risks and limitations that relate to communicating accessibility-based messages to employers?
- How are we auditing all current procedural communication channels to identify opportunities where employers could be notified about student accommodations?

Pillar 2. Accessible spaces

One approach to developing an inclusive co-op culture is to create an overarching strategy related to accessible spaces. To achieve this strategy, it may be necessary to develop strategic priorities related to:

- Creating an accessible built environment
- Creating a safe and welcoming space

The self-study questions in the sections below will help guide you in assessing your current state and envisioning your strategies for improvement.

Creating an accessible built environment

Persons with disabilities, whether they are students, employers, staff or faculty, have the legal right to an accessible building. A good place to start is to ensure that your physical environment is meeting legislated requirements and building code accessibility standards.

Gather Feedback

- How does the built environment within our buildings and spaces that offer programs and support related to co-operative education meet accessibility requirements?

Research

- What information do we have about current accessibility requirements under the building code?
- What do we know about the current requirements related to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and other human rights legislation regarding accessible built environments?
- Do we know of any internal or third party services that could help enable our strategy?
- Do we know of any funding opportunities to help us enhance the accessibility of the built environment?

Audit

- How do we currently audit the physical space to ensure it meets legislated accessibility standards regarding the built environment?
- How will we develop an ongoing procedure to ensure our physical space continually meets accessibility standards?
- What have we learned from completing our AODA accessibility compliance report?

- What can we learn from reviewing our AODA accessibility compliance reports from previous years?

Creating a safe and welcoming environment

A welcoming and safe environment is more than creating an accessible space. It is about how a person uses the space in a dignified and independent manner and how they feel when they enter the space and use services, access information and receive support. Students will interact with faculty, staff and employers through the various stages of the co-operative education employment process. It is important that students, employers, faculty and staff feel that these spaces are safe and inclusive. This is especially important for students, as these are the places where they seek advice from faculty and staff, and the places where students can perform to their highest potential. Through these interactions, it is important to consider that it is not just the messages provided to a student or employer, but also the body language and tone conveyed by faculty and staff. Although it is important to plan for access, there should also be opportunities for people to request accommodation when required to make the environment more accessible and safe for their use.

Gather Feedback

- How safe and welcoming are the spaces that are used and accessed by all receiving support and services related to co-operative education (e.g., reception desks, interview spaces, waiting areas, paging systems, appointment offices, main entrances, washrooms, signage, social/common areas, presentation rooms, etc.)?
- What are the needs and preferences of those who use and access the places where co-op related programs and services are offered?
- What training is currently being offered to employees (at all levels) to ensure they are informed, accommodating, supportive, and offer exceptional customer services (e.g. AODA customer service training, specialized training in mental health first aid, etc.)?
- What additional training would be appropriate to offer employees (at all levels within co-operative education) to ensure they are informed, accommodating, supportive, and offer exceptional customer service?

Research

- Are we aware of best practices in post-secondary education (PSE) for creating safe and welcoming spaces?
- Do we have any resources to help us create welcoming and safe spaces?

Audit

- How will we assess the physical spaces where students and employers interact to ensure it promotes a safe and welcoming environment (beyond AODA standards)?
- How will we assess the effectiveness of current mechanisms for people to request an accommodation to access the physical space?

Pillar 3. Accessible services

One approach to developing an inclusive co-op culture is to create an overarching strategy for accessible services. To achieve this strategy, it may be necessary to develop strategic priorities related to:

- Enabling active and meaningful participation in co-op
- Achieving seamless support services

The self-study questions in the sections below will help guide you in assessing your current state and envisioning your strategy for improvement.

Enabling active and meaningful participation in co-op

The co-op process can be a challenging adjustment for most students. While all students will benefit from information and support that help orient and prepare them to this new experience, students with disabilities may experience additional barriers and unique challenges that will require specialized support and resources. Moreover, while the co-operative education process should be designed for the needs of all students, some students will still have unique needs that require individualized accommodations.

Relevant campus supports such as career services, co-operative education, and/or disability support services should consider offering specific, individual appointments to students entering co-op. These appointments can be designed to help students identify accommodations required to navigate the competitive co-op process, and to develop a care plan to support them for the transition. This will ensure that students with disabilities are prepared for this transition and that accommodations have been established early. Students must also be knowledgeable of how to effectively articulate their disability and request any accompanying accommodations for interviews and/or the workplace. It is important to ensure that information is tailored to the specific needs of the student demographic. For example, students whose co-op term is out-of-province or country will require information specific to that situation. Staff from your disability support services may be most knowledgeable in this area of support.

Post-secondary institutions offering co-operative education programs may offer workshops, courses, or preparatory programs to develop the students' employability skills. It is important to ensure that the content delivered to students is inclusive and takes into consideration the various attributes of an individual's skills and identity. Content needs to be inclusive of persons with disabilities, relevant to their lives, and include their experiences in order for students to benefit from the content.

Gather Feedback

- What on- and off-campus support services are currently provided to students with disabilities to prepare them for co-operative education?
- What resources and support are provided to students with disabilities to inform them about recruitment and/or workplace accommodations, disability disclosure, and the process for requesting accommodations?
- What information and resources are available to employees that enables them to perform their duties in a way that promotes access and belonging?
- What parallels exist between academic-level accommodations and the co-op recruitment activities and processes within the institution's control?

- What additional information and/or support do students with disabilities need to participate meaningfully in co-operative education?
- How do we reflect upon our co-op academic learning outcomes to determine unnecessary barriers?
- How might current processes, programs, services, and resources pose unnecessary barriers to students with disabilities?
- How relevant are current support services and programs (e.g., workshops, courses, etc.) to persons with disabilities?
- What are the demographics of students participating in our co-operative education? Are there differences when compared to the demographics of students with disabilities?
- Which components within the co-op recruitment process may require accommodations?
- Of these components, which of these accommodations do not interfere with the essential requirements of the task?
- Which aspects of the co-operative education experience can be accommodated by the post-secondary institution and which are the employer's responsibility?
- What processes are in place to facilitate accommodations in a way that is dignified, confidential, respectful, and tailored to the individual needs of students?
- How might accommodations, new partnership with community agencies, or new co-op recruitment strategies, impact co-op academic learning outcomes? For example, if interviewing is an essential component of co-op recruitment activities.

Research

- Do we have any available resources on the topics of disclosing a disability, advocating for accommodations, and creating support plans? If such resources exist within our environment, how are students made aware of these resources?

Audit

- How are we currently auditing/assessing our workshops, programs, courses, etc. to ensure content is relevant (and/or targeted) to the lives and experiences of students with disabilities?
- How are we currently auditing all essential co-op requirements, processes, and activities to uncover inherent barriers that may require accommodations?

Achieving seamless support services

There may be multiple service providers on campus that can provide support to co-op students with disabilities (e.g., disability support services, counselling services, career services, co-operative education advisors, faculty/academic advisors). These services may be offered in different buildings, use different systems, and follow different protocols. It is important for students to receive holistic and seamless support. In order for this to occur, the various support units across campus need to have a clear understanding of the role other units play in the process, and the scope of their practice. Moreover, there needs to be effective and secure referral procedures that enables the expedient transfer-of-care or transmission of information. Such information may come in the form of individualized accommodations.

Gather Feedback

- How are employees currently collaborating within and between academic and non-academic departments in an effort to offer seamless support services to students?
- How can we further understand the roles, functions, timelines, and key business challenges of various departments across campus that support co-op students with disabilities?
- What are things within the institution's control, what are within the employers' control, and what are within the students' control?
- What parallels exist between academic-level accommodations and the co-op recruitment activities and processes within the institution's control?
- How can we learn about potential impacts if more (or less) referrals are directed to a particular department?
- If an accommodation is required for the co-operative education recruitment process, how do/could units on campus share critical and sometimes private information with each other? How are accommodations shared with employers? How do we ensure students control the type of information being shared and that privacy is protected?

Research

- Do we know of other post-secondary institutions that provide integrated, seamless support for their students?
- Do we know of any practical tips, strategies, and best practices for providing integrated, seamless client support?

Audit

- How are we currently auditing existing services and supports being provided to students on co-op to identify overlap, gaps, and opportunities for collaboration between service departments?

Final comments

Thank you for using the Co-operative Education Self-Study Guide to support your institution's pursuit of removing barriers and altering current practices to meet the needs of students with disabilities. By creating a culture of accessibility and applying the Ontario's Accessible Employment standards within post-secondary environments, students can access resources and supports in a dignified fashion.

Co-operation between the Steering Committee and working groups is crucial when the GRASP approach to establish an evidence-informed strategic work plan. Moreover, the various self-study questions and the many resources in Appendix A will support your initiative to creating and promoting a more accessible and inclusive co-operative education program and workplace environment.

We wish you the best of luck. May the principles of culture change and collaborative approaches encourage self-discovery of your institution's co-operative education program and guide you toward developing a culture of inclusivity.

Appendix A.1 Worksheet - Gather Feedback, Research and Audit

PILLAR 1: ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION				
Strategic Area	**GRASP Phase**	**What we know** ***Answer the self-study questions listed in Chapter 3***	**What we don't know** ***View appendices B-D for tips on collecting information from other sources and stakeholders***	**What we learned**
Informing and engaging community partners in the initiative	Gather feedback			
	Research			
	Audit			
Ensuring accessible communication and systems	Gather feedback			
	Research			
	Audit			

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Embedding diversity in communication	Gather feedback			
	Research			
	Audit			
Building student awareness of inclusive employers	Gather feedback			
	Research			
	Audit			
Building employers' capacity for accessibility	Gather feedback			
	Research			
	Audit			

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PILLAR 2. ACCESSIBLE SPACES				
Strategic Area	**GRASP Phase**	**What we know** ***Answer the self-study questions listed in Chapter 3***	**What we don't know** ***View appendices B-D for tips on collecting information from other sources and stakeholders***	**What we learned**
Creating an accessible built environment	Gather feedback			
	Research			
	Audit			
Creating a safe and welcoming space	Gather feedback			
	Research			
	Audit			

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PILLAR 3. ACCESSIBLE SERVICES				
Priority Area	**Information source**	**What we know** ***Answer the self-study questions listed in Chapter 3***	**What we don't know** ***View appendices B-D for tips on collecting information from other sources and stakeholders***	**What we learned?**
Enabling active and meaningful participation in co-op	Gather feedback			
	Research			
	Audit			
Achieving seamless support services	Gather feedback			
	Research			
	Audit			

Appendix A.2 Gathering Feedback Tips & Best Practices

How can I gather feedback?

The Working Groups and the Steering Committee have knowledge, expertise, and experiences to draw from when answering the self-study questions in Chapter 3. However, gathering feedback from additional sources is helpful, including those closest to this issue as this will help you and your committee make evidence-based strategies. There are many different ways to gather feedback from your stakeholders, such as:

- Analyzing existing data
  - student or questionnaire results
  - institutional enrollment data
  - disability services student registration
- The discovery phase of the Appreciative Inquiry
- Comment cards
- Focus groups
- Observations
- One-on-one interviews with key stakeholders
- Surveys/Questionnaires
- Kick-off meeting or event to identify early adopters and engaged stakeholders
- Develop process maps to understand who is affected and how information is shared

There is no right or wrong way to gather feedback. Each approach has its own benefits and challenges. It is important to reflect on what feedback you are trying to obtain, and then determine the best approach to achieve this. Qualitative approaches such as informal/formal conversations, open-ended comment cards, or focus groups or interviews are useful when you want to explore and understand a topic or delve deeper into an issue. This is helpful in understanding the viewpoints and opinions of stakeholders, and the current state. On the other hand, quantitative approaches such as online polls, surveys, or content analysis are useful when you want to quantify or measure attitudes, opinions, or behaviours from a larger sample.

What questions should I ask?

All of the self-study questions in Chapter 3 of the Guide have been applied to three stakeholder groups (students, faculty, staff and employers) and are subcategorized by strategic areas. These questions can be used as you gather feedback from your stakeholders.

Gathering feedback from students

Informing and engaging community partners in the initiative

- How would you like to be involved in this self-study project?

Ensuring accessible communication and systems

- What are your accessibility needs and requirements when accessing co-op information or content?
- Are you able to access all online forms (or event sites used to invite students to events)? If not, what barriers did you experience?
- What processes are available for you to access communication and receive information in an alternative format (e.g., large print or ASL interpreter)?
- How accessible are the systems (online and paper-based) connected to the co-op process? Are there any systems, or any system-based processes, that may negatively affect your access?

Embedding diversity in communication

- What would it look like to you when communication materials reflect diversity?
- Do you feel that the content in co-op communications (including images, stories, case studies, and examples) reflects diversity and the lives/experiences of persons with disabilities?
- What opportunities do you have to provide feedback on existing and future content in relation to how it captures diversity and your lived experience?
- How would you like to have your stories, experiences and images be included?

Building student awareness of inclusive employers

- How do/would you, like to be informed about inclusive employers? Are current methods effective?
- How do you currently search for jobs that require unique qualifications and/or experiences (e.g., jobs where the experiences of persons with disabilities would be an asset)?

Building employers' capacity for accessibility

- What information and/or resources do you think employers are seeking related to accessibility and accessible hiring practices? What do you feel employers should know?
- Can you tell me about a time when an employer was inclusive/accessible, or when they implemented a successful accommodation for your or a fellow students with a disability?
- What information do employers not seem to be seeking / asking that you think they should know?

Creating an accessible built environment

- To what extent does the built environment (where co-op programs and services are offered) meet accessibility requirements?

Creating a safe and welcoming space

- How safe and welcoming are the spaces that offer co-op supports and services (e.g. reception desks, interview spaces, waiting areas, paging systems, appointment offices, main entrances, washrooms, signage, social/common areas, presentation rooms, etc.)?
- Tell us about a time when you received service in a space that was particularly welcoming. What characterized it?
- What are your needs and preferences when accessing the places where co-op related programs and services are offered?
- In your opinion, what training should be provided to staff (at all levels within co-op) to ensure they are informed, accommodating, and supportive?

Enabling active and meaningful participation in co-op

- What on and off-campus support services are you aware of that help prepare students with disabilities for co-op?
- What resources and supports are you are aware of that inform students with disabilities about recruitment and/or workplace accommodations, disability disclosure, and the process for requesting accommodations?
- What additional information and/or supports do you need to meaningfully participate in co-op?
- How might current process, programs, services, and resources pose unnecessary barriers to students with disabilities?
- How do current support services and programs (e.g. workshops and courses) reflect your experiences and the lives of persons with disabilities?
- What components within the co-op recruitment process may require accommodations?
- What processes are in place to facilitate accommodations in a way that is dignified, confidential, and tailored to the individual needs of students?

Achieving seamless support services

- How seamless are the support services across campus that offer support to co-op students with disabilities? For those services that are not seamless, what do you see that they could do better?
- What are things within the institution's control, what are within the employers' control, and what are within the students' control?
- Tell us about a time when you received services that you found particularly efficient and left a positive experience. What characterized it?
- Do you believe employees (faculty and staff) are currently collaborating within and between departments in an effort to offer seamless support services to students?
- If an accommodation is required for the co-op recruitment process, how do you envision units on campus sharing critical and sometimes private information about your needs?

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- How should accommodations be shared with employers?

Gathering feedback from academic and non-academic employees

Informing and engaging community partners in the initiative

- Who are the key campus partners/departments we need to engage in our self-study project?
- What existing committees or avenues may be useful for promoting this project?
- How do you want to be engaged and involved in this self-study project?

Ensuring accessible communication and systems

- What are the needs and requirements of those who use and access our content (online/print)?
- Do all of our communication channels and content meet legislated AODA accessibility standards?
    - How do we currently assess this?
    - How do we ensure that any new materials created meet accessibility standards?
- How do we ensure all online forms (or sites used to invite students to events) are accessible?
- How might people request accessible communication and receive information in an alternative formats (e.g., large print or ASL interpreter)?
- How accessible are the systems (online/paper-based) connected to the co-op process? Are there any systems or any system-based processes that may negatively affect a student's access?
- What are the institution's procurement policies and practices with respect to software systems? Are accessibility requirements considered a priority?

Embedding diversity in communication

- Do you feel that the content in co-op communications (including images, stories, case studies, and examples) reflect diversity and the lives/experiences of persons with disabilities?
- What would it look like to you when communication materials reflect diversity?
- What mechanisms are in place for students and other stakeholders to provide feedback on existing and future content? How can they have their experiences and images be included?
- What actions can we take to develop an engagement strategy for students with disabilities to collect their success stories, challenges, and personal examples?

Building student awareness of inclusive employers

- How can we effectively promote inclusive employers to job-seeking students?

- How are students with disabilities currently seeking for jobs that require unique qualifications and/or experiences (e.g., jobs where the experiences of persons with disabilities would be an asset)?
- How effective are our strategies to promote inclusive employers?

Building employers' capacity for accessibility

- Based on your experiences, what information and/or resources do you think employers are seeking related to accessibility and accessible hiring practices? What do you think employers need to know?
- What information do employers not seem to be seeking / asking that you think they should know?
- What information, resources or support do you need in order to promote accessible hiring practices to employers?
- What information are we currently sharing with employers related to accessibility and accessible hiring practices, including disability disclosure and information privacy?
- What mechanism are we currently using to communicate with employers (e.g. promotional material, recruitment-related procedural messages, and hiring policies)?
- What are some positive examples of when an employer was inclusive/accessible, or when they implemented a successful accommodation for students with disabilities? What success stories do we know about that might motivate others?

Creating an accessible built environment

- How does the built environment within our co-op buildings and spaces meet accessibility requirements?

Creating a safe and welcoming space

- How safe and welcoming are the spaces that offer co-op supports and services (e.g. reception desks, interview spaces, waiting areas, paging systems, appointment offices, main entrances, washrooms, signage, social/common areas, presentation rooms, etc.)?
- What are the needs and preferences of those who use and access the places where co-op related programs and services are offered?
- What training is currently being offered to employees (at all levels) to ensure they are informed, accommodating, and supportive (e.g. AODA customer service training, specialized training in mental health first aid, etc.)?
- What additional training are you seeking, or would you feel is appropriate to ensure employees are informed, accommodating, and supportive?

Enabling active and meaningful participation in co-op

- What on and off-campus support services are already being provided to students with disabilities to prepare them for co-op?
- What resources and supports are provided to students with disabilities to inform them about recruitment and/or workplace accommodations, disability disclosure, and the process for requesting accommodations?
- What information and resources are available to employees that enables them to perform their duties in a way that promotes access and belonging?

- What additional information and/or support do students with disabilities need to meaningfully participate in cooperative education?
- How might current process, programs, services, and resources pose unnecessary barriers to students with disabilities?
- How do current support services and programs (e.g. workshops and courses) reflect the lives and experiences of persons with disabilities?
- What are the demographics of students participating in our co-operative education? Are there differences when compared to students with disabilities?
- What components within the co-op recruitment process may require accommodations?
- Which aspects of the co-operative education experience can be accommodated by the postsecondary institution, and which are the employer's responsibility?
- What processes are in place to facilitate accommodations in a way that is dignified, confidential, and tailored to the individual needs of students?

Achieving seamless support services

- How are employees currently collaborating within and between departments in an effort to offer seamless support services to students?
- How can we further understand the roles and functions of various departments across the institution that support co-op students with disabilities?
- What are things within the institution's control, what are within the employers' control, and what are within the students' control?
- What parallels exist between academic-level accommodations and the co-op recruitment activities and processes within the institution's control?
- If accommodations are required for the co-op recruitment process, how do/could the institutional departments share critical and sometimes private information with each other?
- How are/could accommodations shared with employers?

Gathering Feedback from employers

Informing and engaging community partners in the initiative

- What are your needs and requirements when accessing information or content sent out by the university (online and in print)?
- Are you able to access all of our online forms (or event sites used to invite students to events)? If not, what barriers did you experience?
- What processes are available for you to access communication and receive information in an alternative format (e.g., large print or ASL interpreter)?
- How accessible are the systems (online and paper-based) connected to the co-op process? Are there any systems, or any system-based processes, that may negatively affect your access?

- How do you currently ensure that all of your online forms (or event sites used to invite co-op students to your events) are accessible?
- How might people request from you accessible communication and receive information in alternative formats (e.g. large print or ASL interpreter)?

Ensuring accessible communication and systems (if applicable)

- What opportunities do you have to provide feedback on our content (existing and future) in relation to how it captures diversity and your lived experience?
- How does the content in your co-op communications (including images, stories, case studies, and examples) reflect diversity and the lives/experiences of persons with disabilities?
- What mechanisms are in place for students and other stakeholders to provide feedback on existing and future content in relation to how it captures diversity and their lived experience?
- What actions can you take to develop an engagement strategy for students with disabilities to collect their success stories, challenges, and personal examples?

Building student awareness of inclusive employers

- As an inclusive employer, how would you like to be promoted to job-seeking students?

Building employers' capacity for accessibility

- What information and/or resources do you (and/or your colleagues) need regarding accessibility, accessible hiring practices, disability disclosure, and information privacy?
- What information are you currently receiving from the university related to accessibility and accessible hiring practices?
- In what method would you like to receive information about accessibility and accessible hiring practices?
- What are some positive examples of when your organization was inclusive/accessible, or when you implemented a successful accommodation for students with disabilities? What success stories do you have that might motivate others?
- How do you currently structure your interviews?

Creating an accessible built environment

- How do you feel about co-op's built environment meeting accessibility requirements?

Creating a safe and welcoming space

- How safe and welcoming are the spaces that offer supports and services related to co-op (e.g. reception desks, interview spaces, waiting areas, paging systems, appointment offices, main entrances, washrooms, signage, social/common areas, presentation rooms, etc.)?
- What are your needs and preferences when using/accessing the places where co-op related programs and services are offered?
- What additional training should be provided to employees to ensure they are informed, accommodating, and supportive?

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Enabling active and meaningful participation in co-op

- What information and/or supports do you believe students with disabilities need to meaningfully participate in co-op?
- How might current co-op process, programs, services, and resources pose unnecessary barriers to students with disabilities?
- How do current support services and programs (e.g. workshops and courses) reflect the lives and experiences of persons with disabilities? How relevant are they to students with disabilities?
- What components within the cooperative recruitment process may require accommodations?
- Which aspects of the co-operative education experience can be accommodated by the postsecondary institution and which are the employer's responsibility?

Achieving seamless support services

- If an accommodation is required for the co-op recruitment process, how does/could the university share critical and sometimes private information with you?

Appendix A.3 Research-focused Resources

Once you have completed an internal review (by gathering feedback from the Working Groups and other stakeholders), it will be helpful to conduct an external review in order to understand external benchmarks and resources (regulations, laws, best practices, etc.) related to accessibility. The Working Groups and Steering Committee will have knowledge about current evidence-informed practices, on and off-campus resources, and literature on the topic, however, additional research may be required in order to ensure the Steering Committee is making evidence-informed decisions when developing an accessibility strategy. This resource can be used as a starting point to your research efforts. The research topics are grouped by the nine strategic areas and resources are provided to assist you in enhancing accessibility within your organization.

As the Guide is a living document, we are always looking to update and improve our resources. Do you have helpful resources? Email us at ceca.accessability@uwaterloo.ca.

Informing and engaging community partners in the initiative

Research topics

- What are effective methods to promote the self-study process and its findings, while protecting institutional reputation?

  Resources

  - Beyond reporting--the communication strategy: Presented to the Project Management Institute in 2010, Lynda Borne (2010) offers insight on how to effectively target communication to project stakeholders.
  - Developing a Plan for Communication: This toolkit from the University of Kansas provides information on how to develop a plan for communication to raise awareness about issues and your organization's accomplishment.
  - Creating and maintaining partnerships: This toolkit from the University of Kansas presents an outline for developing partnerships among different departments and organizations.
  - Increasing participation and membership: This toolkit from the University of Kansas presents an outline for increasing participation and engaging stakeholders in change efforts.
  - Developing creative promotions: This toolkit from the University of Kansas provides information and tips to help you draw public attention to your initiative.
  - Creating a website: This toolkit from the University of Kansas provides introductory information for creating a web presence.

Ensuring accessible communication and systems

Research topics:

- What are the website accessibility standards and requirements within Ontario?
- What are the accessible communication standards within Ontario?
- What writing and web evaluation tools are available to support our communication auditing process?
- What are the best practices for procurement as it relates to accessibility requirements?

Resources: Regulations, standards, and guidelines

- Ontario Integrated Accessibility Standards (O. Reg. 191/11): Review Part II of this document, Information and Communication Standards.
- AccessForward: Information and Communications Standard: Learn more about the requirements of the Information and Communication Standard in this online module.
- How to make websites accessible: The Government of Ontario provides information on how to make new or significantly updated websites accessible for people with disabilities.
- Ontario Colleges AODA Procurement Toolkit: George Brown's guide will provide you with information on the necessary accessibility features to consider when preparing to procure or acquire goods, services or facilities.
- Digital Accessibility as a Business Practice: In partnership with Ontario's EnAbling Change Program, Ryerson University offers a free online course for organizational leaders.
- Professional Web Accessibility Auditing Made Easy - In partnership with Ontario's EnAbling Change Program, Ryerson University offers a free online course for web content editors and web developers.

Resources: Communication tools and guides

- Accessibility tools: University of Waterloo offers an online resource hub providing links to information, resources, and tools.
- Web Accessibility Evaluation Tools List: The Web Accessibility Initiative provides an extensive list of software programs and online services to help evaluate the accessibility of your web content.
- Writing for accessibility: The MailChimp Content Style Guide provides easy to follow guidelines to help make your writing accessible.

Embedding diversity in communication

Research topics

- What are practical methods of developing and publishing effective stories?

Resources

- Storytelling and Social Change Guide: This online guide by WorkingNarratives.org provides guidance on how to tell great stories in any format and engage audiences in your change movement.
- Arranging news and feature stories: Once you have created your story, this toolkit from the University of Kansas provides tips to help arrange a feature story and raise awareness about your initiative.

Building student awareness of inclusive employers

Research topics

- Which of our current co-op employer partners openly promote inclusive hiring practices and/or have diversity recruitment initiatives targeted to candidates with disabilities?
- Who are other employers that openly promote inclusive hiring practices and/or have diversity recruitment initiatives targeted to candidates with disabilities?
- What are specialized services that collaborate with employers to find and create job opportunities for people with disabilities?
- What are services that specialize in providing resources and employment support for people with disabilities?
- What are promotional opportunities to inform job-seeking students of inclusive employers?

Resource: Prospective partners

- Canadian Business SenseAbility: Canada's only national, bilingual business network dedicated to helping private and public sector organizations become more accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities.
- March of Dimes Canada: A national non-profit organization with the mission of "maximiz[ing] the independence, personal empowerment and community participation of people with physical disabilities".
- Lime Connect: A global non-profit organization with a mission of preparing and connecting high-potential university students and professionals with disabilities to scholarships, internships, The Lime Connect Fellowship Program, and full time careers with their corporate partners.
- Presidents Group: A British Columbia-based network of businesses, large and small, championing for more accessible, inclusive workplaces.
- Specialisterne Canada: A national not-for-profit organization with a goal of facilitating recruitment and employment of neurodiverse people with their corporate partners.
- Disabilities Mentoring Day (DMD): A Canadian annual one-day mentoring event where job-ready people with disabilities pair with companies that utilize the skills they have or are developing through training.
- Next Billion: A free, online 8-week mentorship program to connect students with disabilities to personal mentors in tech.

Building employers' capacity for accessibility

Research topics

- What are the well-known merits to hiring people with disabilities that can be communicated to employers?
- How will we understand provincial, national, and international regulations related to the employer's duty to accommodate?
- What are promotional strategies to effectively reach employers?

Resources: Accessibility tips and tools for employers

- Business case: The province of Ontario's Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities, Access Talent presents a business case and additional information for organizations.
- Employer resources: Canadian Business SenseAbility provides quick facts, an employer library, and information on how organizations can get started with adopting inclusive employment practices.
- The benefits of hiring: Ontario's Discover Ability Network provides employers with information on the opportunity and benefits for hiring people with disabilities.
- Employers' Toolkit: Making Ontario Workplaces Accessible to People With Disabilities (PDF): This resource covers topics such in recruitment and employment, including tips and best practices in interviewing and assessment.
- Beyond Compliance: Accessibility Self-Assessment Tool for Organizations: Employers can take a quiz to learn how they can improve their organization's accessibility practices.

Resources: Laws and regulation resources for Ontario employers

- Government of Ontario's accessibility laws: The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario provides information for employers about accessibility laws, requirements, compliance reports, and opportunities to learn more.
- How to comply with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation: The Government of Ontario provides a downloadable PDF for employers to learn how to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in information and communications, employment, public transportation, and the design of public spaces.
- Integrated Accessibility Standards O. Reg. 191/11: Employers should be aware of Ontario's Integrated Accessibility Standards.
- Human rights and the Duty to Accommodate: The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) provides an e-learning module to help employers learn about the Duty to Accommodate.
- Duty to Accommodate: Employers should also read the Duty to Accommodate found under the OHRC's policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability.

Creating an accessible built environment

Research topics

- What information is available to understand current accessibility requirements under the building code?
- What are the current requirements related to the AODA, and other human rights legislation regarding accessible built environment?
- What are some internal or third-party services that could help enable our strategy?
- What types of funding may be available to help us enhance the accessibility of the built environment?

Resources: Building Code

- Ontario Regulation 332/12: Building Code: Learn about building code standards within the province of Ontario.
- AccessForward: Design of Public Spaces Standard module: Complete the Design of Public Spaces Standard online training module

Resources: Accessibility auditing services in Ontario

- AccessAbility Advantage - Accessibility Audits
- David Berman Developments Inc. - Accessibility Audit Services
- Independent Living Canada
- SPH Planning and Consulting - Facility Accessibility audits

Resources: Government sponsored funding opportunities

- Government of Canada: Funding programs for jobs, training, and social development projects
- Ontario Trillium Foundation

Resources: Physical space auditing tools

- How to comply with the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation: The Government of Ontario provides a downloadable PDF to learn how to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in information and communications, employment, public transportation, and the design of public spaces.
- How to make public spaces accessible: The Government of Ontario provides information on how to make public spaces outside accessible for people with disabilities.
- Facility Accessibility Design Standards: In 2014, Brock University developed a comprehensive document detailing the accessibility requirements for the construction of new spaces and retrofitting, alterations, or additions of existing physical spaces owned, leased, or operated by Brock University.
- Accessible Buildings Checklist: Comprehensive: The Ontario Business Improvement Area Association provides a robust checklist to support your review of the physical space in around your building(s).

Creating a safe and welcoming environment

Research topics

- What are best practices in postsecondary education for creating safe and welcoming spaces?
- What are resources to help us create welcoming and safe spaces?

Resource

- Creating a welcoming environment: Within the Ontario Human Rights Commission's guidelines on accessible education, learn about approaches to creating a welcoming environment.

Enabling active and meaningful participation in co-op

Research topics

- What resources are available on the topics of disclosing a disability, advocating for accommodations, and creating support plans? If such resources exist within other higher education institutions, how are students informed of these resources?
- What resources are available to improve accessibility and inclusivity of courses, workshops, etc.?

Resources

- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service: Ontario Regulation 429/07 under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.
- How to comply with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service: This employer handbook from the Government of Ontario is a guide on how to serve customers with disabilities.
- AccessForward: Customer Service Standard module: Learn the Customer Service Standard in this online training module
- Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Evidence-Based Practices in Vocational Rehabilitation: In 2013, the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Wisconsin Stout jointly published an evidence-based practice counselor toolkit vocational rehabilitation curriculum for people with disabilities.
- Self-Identifying Disability in the Workplace: Wilfrid Laurier University provides information and tips with respect to disability disclosure.
- Recruitment tools, templates and checklists: Employers' Toolkit (zip): This file package from the Canadian Conference Board includes a number of tools, including an individualized accommodation plan template.
- AskJAN: A to Z of Disabilities and Accommodations: Find information about disabilities, impairments, conditions, and accommodations in AskJAN's extensive database.
- Social inclusion audit: This toolkit is targeted to libraries, but can be helpful in assessing and removing barriers to inclusion in your educational programming.
- University of Waterloo's disability disclosure coaching resource (see Appendix C).

Achieving seamless support services

Research topics

- Supporting Student Success: The Role of Student Services within Ontario's Postsecondary Institutions: This study looks at the scope of student affairs and services in higher education and the effect that an institution's organizational structure may have on achieving inter-departmental collaboration.
- How do other postsecondary institutions provide integrated, seamless support for their students?
- What are practical tips, strategies, and best practices for providing integrated, seamless client support?

Appendix A.4 Auditing

Informing and engaging community partners in the initiative

- Audit current communication channels and approaches to understand what opportunities are available for promoting your accessibility vision and self-study project.
- Establish communication guidelines to answer the following:
    - What are key messages that we want to share?
    - What are we willing to share? How might it impact our reputation or expectations?
    - What don't we want to share? What are our reasons for this?
    - What expectations are we establishing through our messages?
- Once guidelines have been established, it is important to assess communications against these guidelines to ensure messages are relaying exactly what you want. In order to do this, you can develop measures such as a checklist to ensure future messages follow the established guidelines.
- Assess the risks of promoting the project to certain groups including the appropriate timing of engaging with those groups.

Ensuring accessible communication and systems

- Conduct an audit of all relevant communication channels and systems to ensure they adhere to AODA standards and meet accessibility best practices. Focus on the following:
    - Audio/visual and other digital content
    - Paper-based materials
    - Online content
    - Messages and emails
- Assess systems and communication-based barriers that can be controlled and those that cannot be controlled.
    - Identify opportunities for people to request accommodations, particularly if there are barriers within the system or process.
    - Identify the systems/communication channels that cannot be readily changed with the intent to develop a 'workaround plan'.
- Conduct an audit of mechanisms related to university-affiliated events. Identify opportunities for students to request accommodations and/or needs.

Embedding diversity in communication

- Conduct an audit of all co-op-related informational content targeted to students with disabilities to measure its relevance to your campus community.
- Audit career and professional development content for students to identify opportunities to create images, stories, and lived experiences of people with disabilities.
- Audit materials targeted to employers to identify opportunities for designing images, stories, and lived experiences of people with disabilities.
- Audit all mechanisms in place where campus community members can provide feedback on content being or will be developed.
- Establish guidelines on developing diversity-focused content.
- Establish guidelines on including examples of people that reflect your community.

Building student awareness of inclusive employers

- Audit all current and potential communication channels to identify opportunities for promoting inclusive employers.
    - Formats to audit:
        - Websites
        - Email
        - Posters
        - Social media
- Assess limitations that may exist related to promoting positions targeted solely to persons with disabilities.
- Conduct a risk assessment to promoting positions targeted solely to persons with disabilities.
- Establish recruitment guidelines to answer the following:
    - What jobs do we want to share?
    - What are we willing to share? How might it impact our reputation or expectations?
    - What don't we want to share? What are our reasons for this?
    - What expectations are we establishing through our messages?

Building employers' capacity for accessibility

- Audit all current and potential communication channels to identify opportunities for promoting inclusive employers.
    - Formats to audit:
        - Websites
        - Email
        - Posters
        - Social media
- Assess limitations that may exist related to promoting accessibility-based messages to employers.
- Conduct a risk assessment to promoting accessibility-based messages to employers.
- Audit all current procedural communication channels to identify opportunities where employers could be notified about student accommodations.
- Establish communication guidelines to answer the following:
    - What information do we want to share?
    - What are we willing to share? How might it impact our reputation or expectations?
    - What don't we want to share? What are our reasons for this?
    - What expectations are we establishing through our messages?

Creating an accessible built environment

- Audit the physical space to ensure it meets legislated accessibility standards regarding the built environment. HINT: Connect with people with disabilities and/or a reputable group, as people with lived experiences can more readily identify potential issues.
    - Refer to the many resources found under the "Creating an accessible built environment" heading of Appendix A.3.
- Develop a policy and process to establish a timeline (e.g. bi-annual) for your physical space auditing procedure.

- Assess the current physical space auditing procedures to identify if further mechanisms are required to fully assess and audit buildings and spaces for accessibility standards.
- Review all previous compliance reports and create a "lessons learned" summary with the intention of developing recommendations for improving your auditing procedure.

Creating a safe and welcoming environment

- Strategies for assessing the space - observe the space with an eye for a safe and welcoming space.
- Shadow client service representatives to learn more about their work and how they interact with students.
    - Shadow members may consist of Working group members, external party, management
    - Goal: Ensure the training protocol is adequate to promote a safe and welcoming space.
- Audit the effectiveness of current mechanisms for people to request an accommodation for accessing the physical space.
- Audit the effectiveness of current mechanisms for people to provide feedback regarding the space.

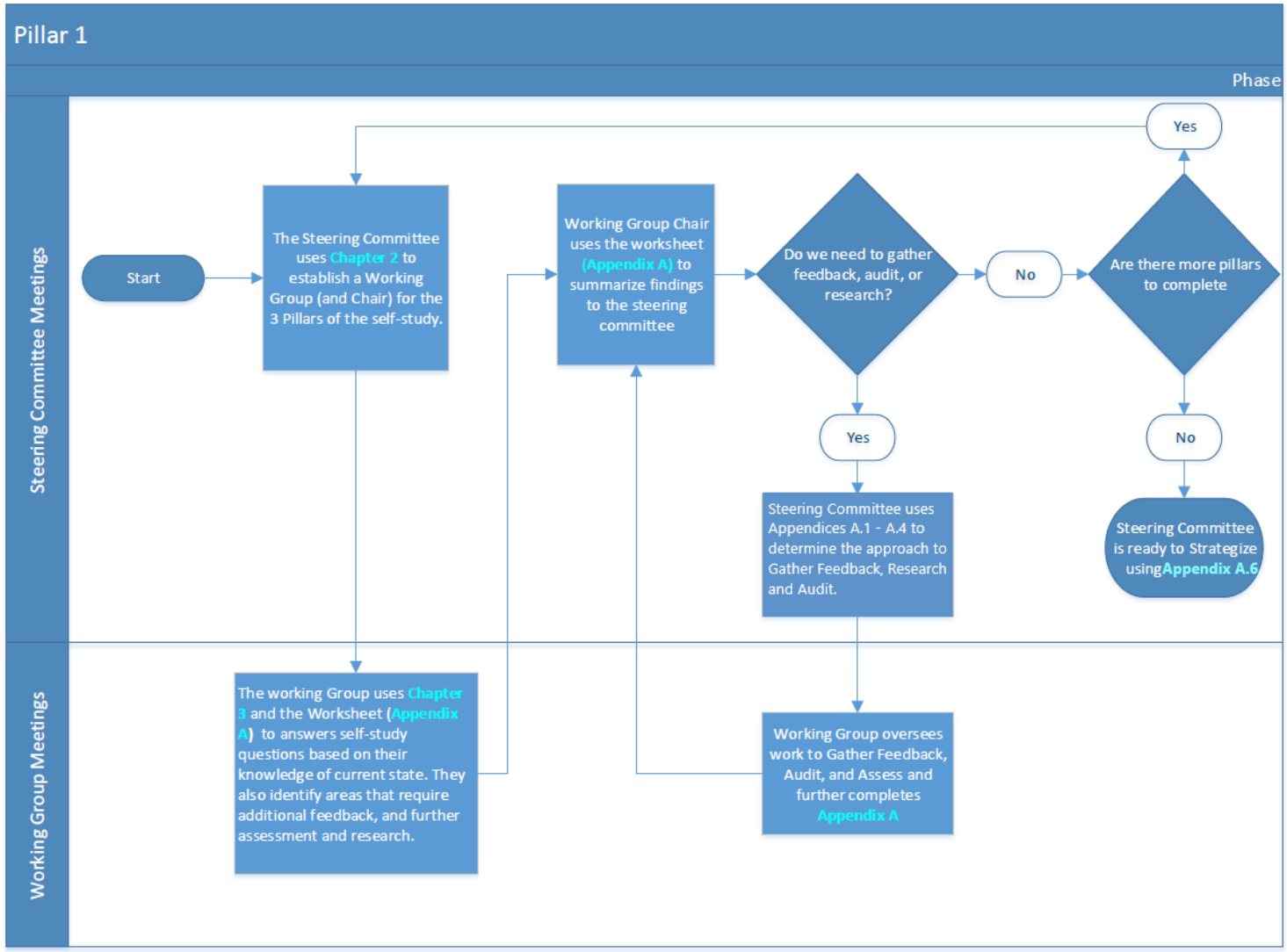
Enabling active and meaningful participation in co-op

- Assess the contents of workshops, programs, courses, etc., to ensure it is inclusive and reflects the lived experiences of persons with disabilities.
    - Refer to the resources found under the "Enabling active and meaningful participation in co-op" heading of Appendix A.3.
- Audit all co-op requirements and essential processes to determine barriers and aspects that may require accommodations.

Achieving seamless support services

- Audit all activities and co-op processes that students might complete to successfully find employment, and identify any gaps in service and support.

Appendix A.5 Process diagram: Gather Feedback, Research & Audit



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Appendix A.6 Steering Committee Strategy Worksheet

Strategic Priority Planning Tool		
High Priority (within year 1)	**Medium Priority (within year 1)**	**Low Priority (within year 1)**

Strategic Planning Tool						
Strategic priorities	**Specific actions/tactics**	**Lead person**	**Start date**	**End date**	**Milestones**	**Measure of success**

Appendix A.7 Promoting and celebrating success

In this final phase, you will enact your tactics and measure each for success. Celebrate these changes; as action plans are

Opportunities to promote to students

- Word-of-mouth opportunities:
  - Committee meetings
  - On-campus events
  - Campus tours
  - Academic program and/or campus orientation
  - Individual student adviseme meetings
- The institution's website
- Email
- Faculty and staff email signatures
- Systems-based updates and notices
- Social media
- Local news stories

Opportunities to promote to staff

- Word-of-mouth opportunities:
  - Team staff meetings
  - Committee meetings
  - On-campus events
  - Staff orientation and training
- The institution's website
- Staff bulletins
- Faculty and staff email lists
- Social media
- Local news stories

Opportunities to promote to employers

- Word-of-mouth opportunities:
  - On-campus events
  - Campus tours
  - Individual employer consultation meetings
- The institution's website
- Emails
- Faculty and staff email signatures
- Systems-based updates and notices
- Local news stories

Promotional resources

- Developing creative promotions: This toolkit from the University of Kansas provides information and tips to help you draw public attention to your initiative.
- Managing client expectations: This excerpt from the Guide to Project Management provides tips and tools for setting and managing project expectations with your stakeholders.
- Beyond reporting--the communication strategy: Presented to the Project Management Institute in 2010, Lynda Borne (2010) offers insight on how to target communication effectively to project stakeholders.
- Developing a Plan for Communication: This toolkit from the University of Kansas provides information on how to develop a plan for communication to raise awareness about issues and your organization's accomplishment.

Appendix B. Key terms

Authentic Partnership – A collaborative approach used to engage those most impacted by an issue in designing and facilitating social change, equality, and empowerment. Learn more about Authentic Partnerships.

Chair – Lead representative of the *Working Group*. This individual also sits on the *Steering Committee*.

Disability – Disability is defined as per the Ontario Human Rights Code, where disability covers a broad range and degree of conditions that can be permanent, temporary, sporadic, and suspected, including, but not limited to physical disabilities, learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, mental health disabilities, as well as disabling medical conditions. This definition is constantly evolving as there are changes in human rights law. As such, the meaning of disability should be interpreted broadly, and should remain flexible and encompassing of new and emerging disabilities including those where a precise diagnosis is unclear or not yet determined.

GRASP – An acronym representing the five-phase approach used in the Guide to organize the process of engaging in culture change and developing strategic plans of action.

Gather Feedback

- Conduct an internal review of the current environmental state within the department(s)/organization
- Collect additional feedback by those most impacted by an issue

Research

- Reflect on the current external environment and identify topics that require additional research
- Complete an external review to learn about resources, literature, services, and evidence-based practices relevant to an issue

Assess

- Reflect on how the department/organization aligns with best practices, current legislation, the needs/expectations of your clients, and internal values/visions, and identifies areas requiring further audit or assessment
- Audit or assess the performance of your department/organization with best practices, current legislation, internal values/visions, and stakeholder needs

Strategize

- Create a plan to prioritize the strategic areas that will best support the department/organization towards enhancing accessibility

Promote

- Celebrate the change by planning promotional strategies to make your actions known to your stakeholders

Pillar – A critical area related to co-operative education and accessibility. Each Pillar reflects a Standard of the AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act).

Steering Committee – A group of appointed leaders and champions of change who will lead and oversee the self-study and the development of strategic plans of action. This group will likely contain senior leaders, managers, and student representative(s).

Working Group – Three groups in all, each group will explore a critical area (see Pillar) by working through the self-study questions in Chapter 3 and resources in Appendix A.

Appendix C. Disability disclosure resource

Consider using all, or part, of this content if you choose to create disability disclosure materials for your co-op students.

Why should I disclose my disability?

Disclosure is the action of sharing information about a disability. It is a personal choice to share information to an interviewer, supervisor, or others. An Accommodation Consultant (AccessAbility Services) or Career Advisor (Centre for Career Action) can help you consider your options. Remember, if there is no impact on the function/duties of the role you are applying to or currently working in, disclosure is not mandatory. There are several reasons why you may want to disclose:

You require an accommodation

You may be required to disclose the need for an interview or workplace accommodation because of your disability. This will enable your interviewer/supervisor to provide you with the support and accommodations you require to contribute to your fullest potential. Requesting accommodations does not typically entail sharing personal health information. It does, however, require that you work collaboratively with your supervisor, interviewer, or Human Resources representative to find solutions that will enable you to meet the requirements of the job. Learn more about the individuals you must disclose to in the section *Whom should I disclose my disability to?*.

Pre-emptive conversation to put others at ease

Depending on the nature of your disability, you may choose to disclose information about yourself and your disability to put people at ease or to explain certain behaviours. Always remember that it is not required to disclose a disability early in the recruitment process (e.g., in your cover letter), even if the disability requires accommodation. More information about the disclosure timing is found below in the section *When should I disclose my disability?*.

Presenting your disability as an asset

People with disabilities provide a unique perspective and competitive advantage as job seekers. By describing your life and work experiences to an interviewer, it can allow you to provide a convincing, memorable introduction of your strengths. Consider including how your disabilities provide you with unique benefits and abilities. Storytelling and positive framing places the focus on your skills, not limitations that might affect job duties.

Your rights

People with disabilities are protected by Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Canadian Human Rights Act, along with provincial and territorial human rights codes. The Canadian Human Rights Commission states that a supervisor is "required to ensure that all people affected by [their] organization are treated equally, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation or any of the other grounds of discrimination listed in the Canadian Human Rights

Act". This means a supervisor or interviewer has a duty to fulfill a person's request for accommodation to ensure the person can meaningfully participate.

A supervisor or interviewer has a duty to accommodate an individual up to the point of undue hardship. If an accommodation is likely to cause significant health and safety risks, this could be considered undue hardship. Learn more about undue hardship.

Co-op students registered with the University of Waterloo's AccessAbility Services can arrange to meet with an Accommodations Consultant to discuss what might need to go into their accommodation plan. This way, a student can bring specialized insight and confidence to conversations they will have with a supervisor or interviewer about creating effective accommodations.

Accommodation examples

The following examples highlight some accommodations used in a workplace or interview. For more accommodation options, search AskJAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource, a database of accommodation ideas. For advice on accommodations, please visit University of Waterloo's AccessAbility Services.

- Enhanced Accessibility
  - Accessible formats of all employment materials
  - Physically accessible spaces like lunchrooms, washrooms
- Modifying or creating policies
  - Allowing or disallowing certain foods, items of clothing (e.g., wearing a hat if you suffer migraines brought on by fluorescent lights)
- Modified/flexible scheduling
  - Allowed window of arrival to work
  - Allowing part-time or reduced work schedule
  - Allowing periodic breaks
  - Changing a shift; exclusions from overtime
  - Allowing an extended work day
- Job Restructuring
  - Altering the way a job function is performed, or temporarily modifying a duty, that allows job to be performed at a level that is still productive.

Whom should I disclose my disability to?

Share only what's needed to accommodate with the people who accommodate you

It is not essential to divulge all personal information about your disability. In the workplace, you should only disclose your disability to those who need to be involved in the accommodation process. This may include:

- Human Resources (HR) representative
- Your supervisor
- Employee Assistance Program counselor – If you're already working, have started experiencing problems, and need assistance determining how and to whom to disclose

A Human Resources representative or a specialist, such as an occupational health nurse, may require full disclosure. Full disclosure would include specific information about your disability. Someone like your supervisor may only need a partial disclosure, which may include information about your accommodation(s) or the existence of a disability, but not a full diagnosis.

All individuals and all organizations are different. In some places, you might create an accommodation plan in collaboration with your supervisor and your HR representative. In other places, you might create an accommodation plan with an HR representative who shares relevant information with your supervisor. You have the right to ask for either arrangement.

How should I disclose my disability?

Script and practice what you'll say

Disclosure can be a challenging conversation. To help you build confidence and feel better prepared, practice what you might tell the interviewer/supervisor in advance with trusted family or friends. A disclosure script could include:

- A brief description of your disability – Be concise and avoid using clinical or technical terms that can be confusing and intimidating. You do not need to thoroughly discuss your diagnosis.
- An emphasis on your job-related skills and abilities – You want to convey the message that you're a qualified candidate with great skills who also happens to have a disability, rather than focusing just on your disability.
- A description of the barriers that you may experience in the workplace that may interfere with your job performance.
- Suggestions for accommodations and open willingness to collaborate with your potential/current supervisor.

Sample disclosure script

"I have the keys skills and abilities, and can perform the essential functions of this job. As an individual with *(provide the preferred term for your disability),* sometimes my (functional limitation) interferes with my ability to (*describe the duties you may have difficulty performing*), but I find it extremely helpful when (*describe the specific accommodations you need*)."

Protecting your privacy

It is recommended that you take notes during your conversations with your HR representative or supervisor regarding your accommodations and that you both approve a written accommodation plan. This may be useful for future reference in case of discrepancies. You have the right to know what happens to your personal information if you choose to share it. You can always ask where your information is being stored and who has access to it. Medical information should be kept confidential if this is provided to others; accommodations and medical information should be kept separate from other employee/personnel files.

When should I disclose my disability?

There is no simple answer, as there are many factors to consider. We have created a disclosure decision table to help support your decision. Remember: you are not required to disclose a disability unless you need an accommodation. You do not have to co-workers and colleagues, ever.

Disclosure Decision Table

Timing	Benefits	Risks	Notes and tips
On a job application	• Helps interviewer decide how to plan for accommodation / re-evaluation of the job • Your disability can be an asset to the job and this might be the time to promote that	• This might disqualify you with no opportunity to present you, your skills, and qualifications	• Disclosure on the cover letter is usually not recommended unless the interviewer is openly seeking candidates with disabilities to fill the position. In that case, this would be the appropriate time to disclose.
Response to interview invitation	• Puts onus on interviewer to determine interview-related accommodations • Discrimination less likely as interviewer has already reviewed your application • Prepares the interviewer(s) with what to expect	• Whether you need it or not, interviewer may equate an interview accommodation with the need for a workplace accommodation • This could create a negative first impression before the interview even occurs	• Regardless of disability type, disclosure at this stage is best suited when interview accommodation is needed • If you have a physical disability, disclosing eliminates any guesswork on accessibility of interview space • Employers in Canada have a duty to accommodate for all aspects of recruitment
During an interview	• Opportunity to focus positively, in-person, on how your ability to do the job with a disability • Openness with interviewer at this stage can translate to positive workplace relationships	• Puts responsibility on you to disclose when trust is not yet established with interviewer • Interviewer might focus more on disability than your ability	• Most appropriate time to disclose and discuss accommodation strategies • Employers in Canada have a duty to accommodate you in the workplace • Be prepared to explain/reiterate your ability to perform the job
After you've been matched / received the job offer	• Gives the supervisor time to put some accommodations in place • Shows initiative and problem solving skills as you are proactive about getting ready for the job	• Interviewer might feel that you should have disclosed earlier • If company is outside of Canada, offer could be rescinded	• If disability affects essential job skills, this is the most appropriate time to disclose • Employers in Canada have a duty to accommodate you in the workplace • Be prepared to explain/reiterate your ability to perform the job
After you start work	• You have the opportunity to prove your abilities before you disclose • Openness about your disability: Allows you to respond to disability questions with peers at work	• Unpredictable reactions from supervisor and/or co-workers • Disclosure might change workplace dynamic and relationships	• Once you start work, there are more disclosure decisions. For example, you may choose to disclose to some co-workers but not your supervisor • This approach might be better suited for person with an invisible disability, especially if disability does not affect essential job skills • If you are performing your duties on the job, a supervisor cannot legally terminate you
After a disability-related issue on the job	• You have the opportunity to prove your abilities before you disclose • Shows initiative and demonstrates that you want to perform effectively at the job	• Unpredictable reactions from supervisor and/or co-workers • Supervisor may accuse you of dishonesty/falsifying job application	• Relationships with co-workers could be damaged if there is feeling that you've been untruthful • It may be difficult to regain the supervisor's trust
Never	• You will not be questioned about your disability • Your privacy is maintained	• If disability is discovered, there is the perceived risk of negative reactions, including accusations of dishonesty/falsifying job application	• If you don't need to disclose, then don't feel pressure to disclose • For co-op students with a disability, this might be a worthwhile strategy provided that you are able to perform job tasks to the satisfaction of the supervisor without

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Timing	Benefits	Risks	Notes and tips
		• If you need help, and you're not disclosing, no one is able to support you	accommodation or supports. Not sure if you need an accommodation or supports? Talk to an Accommodations Consultant at AccessAbility Services.

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